

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

EB-11 NEA-10 IO-13 RSR-01 /136 W

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R 131801Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USINT ALGIERS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, FR, AG

SUBJECT: BOUTEFLIKA COMES TO PARIS

SUMMARY: ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA'S JULY 9-12 OFFICIAL VISIT TO PARIS GENERATED AMICABLE ATMOSPHERE AND SUBSTANTIAL PRESS COMMENTARY BUT MINIMAL SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS. JULY 12 JOINT COMMUNIQUE IS LIMITED TO GENERALITIES WITH ABSENCE OF ANY CONVINCING EXPRESSIONS OF DEEP MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP OR ALIGNMENT. DETAILS OF BOUTEFLIKA-JOBERT TALKS NOT YET KNOWN TO QUAI OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

1. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ALGERIA, PAOLI, TOLD EMBOFF JULY 12 THAT BOUTEFLIKA HAD OBVIOUSLY ENJOYED THIS FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO PARIS OF ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER. FRENCH MOTIVATION FOR ORIGINALLY PROPOSING THIS VISIT LAST YEAR HAD BEEN IN PART TO SATISFY BOUTEFLIKA'S EGO BUT PRIMARILY TO GIVE FRENCH-ALGERIAN RELATIONS A SHOT IN THE ARM. WHILE APPEARANCE OF A SPECIAL GOA-GOF RELATIONSHIP HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BY GIVING VISIT THE POMP AND PUBLICITY OF OFFICIAL
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VISIT, THERE HAD BEEN NO ATTEMPT ON EITHER SIDE TO

NEGOTIATE SPECIFIC ITEMS OR GO DEEPLY INTO QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANCE, ACCORDING TO PAOLI. HE ADDED CAVEAT, THAT BOUTEFLIKA MET AT GREAT LENGTH WITH JOBERT WHO KEEPS RESULTS OF SUCH TALKS LARGELY TO HIMSELF.

2. REFERRING TO LARGE AMOUNT OF PRESS COVERAGE ON BOUTEFLIKA VISIT, PAOLI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BOUTEFLIKA HAD BEN SWEEPING DUST UNDER THE CARPET BY SAYING REPEATEDLY THERE WERE NO CONTENTIOUS ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN ALGIERS AND PARIS. PAOLI SAID BLOCKED BANK ACCOUNTS OF FORMER FRENCH RESIDENTS PLUS NATIONALIZATION OF COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS WERE LEADING UNSOLVED ITEMS. JOBERT'S TACTIC, HOWEVER, HAD BEEN TO LEAVE THESE SUBJECTS ASIDE SO AS TO INSURE HARMONIOUS VISIT, BUT SIMULTANEOUSLY TO EMPHASIZE ADVANTAGES ALGERIA COULD GAIN IN FUTURE BY SOLVING THESE DIFFERENCES. PAOLI SAID THIS WAS EXTENSION OF DE GAULLE'S POLICY OF TOLERATING RELATIVELY UNFRIENDLY ACTS ON PART OF ALGERIA IN SEARCH FOR GENERALLY AMICABLE RELATIONS.

3. PAOLI SAID JOBERT PRESUMABLY HOPES THAT THIS VISIT WILL BE FOLLOWED BY SPECIFIC NEGOTIATIONS IN WHICH ALGERIANS WOULD ATTEMPT REACH MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISES. HE ADMITTED THAT NO SUCH NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN SCHEDULED. FROM LITTLE HE KNOWS OF PRIVATE MEETINGS BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTERS, PAOLI GATHERS BOUTEFLIKA WAS NOT NEGATIVE IN REACTION TO JOBERT'S TACTIC, BUT PROMISED NOTHING.

4. PAOLI SAID ALGERIANS HOLD FRANCE RESPONSIBLE FOR EC POLICIES PREJUDICIAL TO ALGERIAN WINE EXPORTS. HE INDICATED BOUTEFLIKA HAD CONSTANTLY RETURNED TO THIS ACCUSATION WHENEVER HE FELT DEFENSIVE IN DISCUSSING OTHER ISSUES. FRENCH HAD NOT BEEN ABLE CONVINCE HIM THAT OTHER EC PARTNERS (IN THIS CASE IMPLICITY ITALY) EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE.

5. FRENCH ALSO HAD TO TELL BOUTEFLIKA THAT THEY COULD NOT INCREASE NUMBER OF FRENCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS PROVIDED UNDER CONTINUING 50-50 COST SHARING AGREEMENTS. THIS IS LARGEST "COOPERANT" PROGRAM FRANCE HAS AND ALGERIA DERIVES GREAT BENEFIT ESPECIALLY IN FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH, PAOLI SAID.

6. PAOLI ALSO SAID FRENCH WILL CONTINUE WITH PRESENT LEVEL OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN FORM OF SELLING PLANES

AND PROVIDING MAINTENANCE TECHNICIANS. HE BELIEVES THIS HAS HAD APPRECIABLE EFFECT IN PULLING ALGERIANS AWAY FROM SOVIET INFLUENCE, WHICH HE NOW CONSIDERS MORE LIMITED THAN IN PAST. PAOLI ALSO SAID BOTH ALGERIA AND FRANCE SATISFIED WITH CONTINUING ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALGERIAN EXPATRIATE WORKERS IN FRANCE AS WELL AS FRENCH-ALGERIAN COOPERATION IN PETROLEUM FIELD. FRENCH FIRMS CFP AND ELF-ERAP ARE CONTENT; THERE ARE EVEN SOME NEW CONTRACTS CONCERNING PETROLEUM PROSPECTING.

7. PAOLI SAID TALKS WITH BOUTEFLIKA HAD CONCENTRATED MORE ON LARGER WORLD PROBLEMS THAN ON BILATERAL ISSUES. TO HIS KNOWLEDGE THERE HAD BEEN NO MENTION OF MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE AND ALGERIANS ARE NOT CURRENTLY PROPOSING ONE. BOUTEFLIKA HAD EMPHASIZED CONFERENCE WHICH ALGERIA WILL BE HOSTING. PAOLI SAID BOUTEFLIKA HAD MAINTAINED HIS IMAGE AS CHAMPION OF NON-ALIGNMENT. HE HAD INSISTED ON COMMUNIQUE INCLUDING NEED FOR FORTHCOMING INTERNATIONAL MONETARY NEGOTIATIONS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION REQUIREMENTS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. ALTHOUGH JOINT COMMUNIQUE STRESSES FRENCH CHAMPIONING OF ALGERIAN-TUNISIAN INTERESTS AT CSCE, BOUTEFLIKA HAD NOT SHOWN GREAT APPRECIATION FOR JOBERT'S ROLE.

8. ON MIDDLE EAST, PAOLI ACKNOWLEDGED PRESS INTEREST IN BOUTEFLIKA SUGGESTION OF DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS; HE EMPHASIZED THAT ALGERIANS INSISTED ON PURELY PALESTINIAN ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM AND DISREGARD FOR ALL OTHER ISSUES INCLUDING THOSE IN UNSC RES 242. PAOLI SAID JOINT COMMUNIQUE INCLUDES ONLY "MEANINGLESS" GENERALITIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON ME, SINCE ALGERIANS WOULD NOT AGREE TO MENTIONING SC RES 242 AND ON THAT BASIS FRENCH UNWILLING INCLUDE MENTION OF PALESTINIANS.

9. COMMENT: BOUTEFLIKA VISIT APPEARS TO HAVE PAPERED OVER SOME FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL RIFTS ON BOTH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES. FRANCE HAS SERVED ITS LONG TERM INTEREST IN SHORING UP TIES WITH IMPORTANT NEIGHBOR ON STRATEGIC SOUTHERN FLANK. GOF PROBABLY HAS ALSO SERVED GENERAL WESTERN INTEREST IN PROVIDING ALGERIA WITH CONTINUED ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIETS. IT IS, HOWEVER, DOUBTFUL THAT SUFFICIENT GOOD WILL GIVEN SO THAT ALGERIANS WILL BE IMMEDIATELY FORTHCOMING IN CLEARING UP REMAINING CONTENTIOUS ISSUES WITH FRANCE. EXEMPT IRWIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: thigpegh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PARIS19273
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730735/aaaaazng.tel
Line Count: 169
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: thigpegh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22-Aug-2001 by smithrj>; APPROVED <18-Oct-2001 by thigpegh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOUTEFLIKA COMES TO PARIS SUMMARY: ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA'S JULY
TAGS: PFOR, FR, AG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005